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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current status of sport sociology within American and Canadian Colleges and Universities. The study investigated: (1) the number of graduate and undergraduate courses offered in sport sociology; (2) current research area(s) of interest within sport sociology; (3) current text used as reference and topics discussed within the sport sociology course(s); and (4) career placement of sport sociology students. One hundred members (1981-82) of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport were randomly selected to participate in this study. A total response of 54 surveys were returned--47 from the United States and 7 from Canada. The results indicated that American and Canadian colleges and universities are continuing to offer required or elective undergraduate and graduate courses in sport sociology. These courses have been offered for almost seven years. Consistent topics covered within the sport sociology courses were: sport socialization, race and sport, and politics and sport. Current research is being conducted in the areas of socialization, women and sexism, and small groups. (Author)

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The Current Status of Sport Sociology Within American and Canadian Colleges and Universities

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Running Head: SPORT SOCIOLOGY IN NORTH AMERICA

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The Current Status of Sport Sociology Within American and Canadian Colleges and Universities

Introduction

Sport sociology has been identified as an academic sub-field for only about eighteen years. Today, both physical educators and sociologists are attracted to the study of sport sociology (McPherson, 1979). Teacher education institutions now perceive sport sociology competencies as important for teachers to attain, however, few institutions require future teachers to complete course work in sport sociology (Southard, 1981).

The present generation of sport sociologists have earned doctorates, completing graduate work in the areas of sociology, social psychology and physical education (McPherson, 1979). Sport sociology is a relatively new academic area requiring a high level of specificity. At the present time, these two conditions do not permit a large number of scholars within the field (Luschen, 1980). These conditions led Loy, McPherson, and Kenyon (1978) to conclude that sport sociology in North America is lacking a critical mass of productive scholars. About two dozen individuals comprise the social circle of working sport sociologists. Loy et al. (1978) further concluded that the field of sport sociology is not likely to be perceived as a legitimate field of study until more scholars are teaching and conducting research in the field.

In North America, there are a limited number of sport sociologists teaching in physical education programs. Less than one-half dozen departments of physical education in Canada and America have two or more graduate faculty members actively engaged in teaching and research in the area of sport sociology (Loy, Kenyon, & McPherson, 1980). This apparent lack of graduate faculty members reduces the number of sport sociology programs available for potential graduate students. However, Purdy (1980) found that the number of graduate students in the field has increased steadily since 1973.

Limited work opportunities and a lack of available teaching positioning, within the field of sport sociology, may necessitate the field to develop alternative careers for graduate students holding degrees in sport sociology. Teachers in the field of sport sociology are continuing to find an increase in the number of texts available. Loy and Kenyon (1969) edited the first reader in sport sociology. A perusal of existing texts indicate that a number of anthologies of sport sociology have been published in North America (Loy et al., 1980). Four new textbooks appeared in sport sociology in 1978: Coakley; Eitzen and Sage; Loy, McPherson and Kenyon; and Snyder and Spreitzer (Spreitzer, Snyder, & Jourdan, 1980).

Today, sport sociologists are beginning to increase their research activities within the field. The most popular areas of interest are socialization, racism, stratification, youth sports and the social structure of sport (Purdy, 1980). Sport sociologists conducting research have been urged to show a stronger concern for methodology and to integrate general sociology theory into their research designs (Krawczyck, 1977; Luschen, 1980).

The future of sport sociology in North America appears to be encouraging. However, the sub-field continues to seek recognition and legitimacy within physical education and sociology.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current status of sport sociology within American and Canadian colleges and universities. More specifically, the study investigated: (a) the number of graduate and undergraduate courses offered in sport sociology, (b) current research area(s) of interest within sport sociology, (c) current text used as reference and topics discussed within the sport sociology course(s), and (d) career placement of sport sociology students.

Procedures

One hundred (N=100) members (1981-82) of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport were randomly selected to participate in this study. These subjects were mailed the Sport Sociology Questionnaire in the Fall of 1982.

Eighty-four (N=84) colleges/universities were selected from the United States and sixteen (N=16) were selected from Canadian colleges/universities. A total response of fifty-four (N=54) surveys were returned (N=47, United States; N=7, Canada).

Questionnaire

The Sport Sociology Questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The participants in this study were asked to answer the following questions:

1. Does your department offer an undergraduate course in Sport Sociology? A graduate course? If yes, what topics are covered in Sport Sociology? Number of "majors" (undergraduate/graduate) enrolled in Sport Sociology program?
2. Are the courses in Sport Sociology elective or required? Undergraduate level? Graduate level?

3. How long has the course(s) in Sport Sociology been offered by your university/department? Undergraduate level? Graduate level?
4. What books do you use as reference in your Sport Sociology classes?
5. In what area(s) are faculty conducting research?
6. Within your college/university, what are the future plans for Sport Sociology?

Results

Does your department offer an undergraduate or graduate course(s) in sport sociology?

The number of colleges and universities offering an undergraduate course(s) in sport sociology: 37 (69%). Number of colleges and universities offering no graduate course in sport sociology: 10 (19%). The number of colleges and universities offering a graduate course(s) in sport sociology: 33 (61%). Number of colleges and universities offering no graduate course in sport sociology: 14 (26%).

What topics are covered in your undergraduate and graduate course(s) in sport sociology?

The following topics appeared often as being included in the undergraduate course(s) in sport sociology: (a) socialization and (b) race and sport. Sport in society and politics and sport appeared often as being included in the graduate course(s) in sport sociology (see Table 1 & 1A).

Insert Table 1 and 1A about here

Number of "majors" in sport sociology at the undergraduate and graduate levels?

The number of "majors" at the undergraduate level ranged from 50 to 4 students. Twenty-three (46%) colleges and universities reported zero "majors" in sport sociology. The number of "majors" at the graduate level ranged from 20 to 1 student. Seventeen (31%) colleges and universities reported zero "majors" in sport sociology. The majority of the sport sociology "majors" are employed in the following areas: (a) teaching, (b) recreation and (c) sports administration and management.

Are the course(s) in sport sociology elective or required at the undergraduate and graduate levels?

The following results were obtained from the institutions that did offer a course(s) (graduate or undergraduate) in sport sociology: 21 (57%) institutions require sport sociology at the undergraduate level while 19 institutions offer sport sociology as an elective course. Fourteen (42%) institutions require sport sociology at the graduate level. Sixteen institutions offer sport sociology as an elective course at the graduate level. Three universities indicated that they offer two or more elective courses in sport sociology.

How long has the course in sport sociology been offered by your university/department at the undergraduate level? graduate level?

The average number of years that sport sociology has been taught on the undergraduate level is 7 years (S.D. = 4.13 years). The University of Waterloo reported one of the longest established undergraduate courses in sport sociology: 15 years. The average number of years that sport sociology has been taught on the graduate level is 6.97 years (S.D. = 3.64 years). East Stroudsburg reported one of the longest established graduate courses in sport sociology: 14 years.

What books do you use as reference in your sport sociology classes?

The following texts represent those books most cited as reference material for sport sociology courses. These books were either required or suggested reading for the undergraduate or graduate student: (a) Coakley, J., Sport in Society (23 citations); (b) Sage, G., Sport and American Society (22 citations) (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here

In what area(s) are faculty conducting research?

Research in the area of sport sociology is being conducted in the following areas: (a) socialization and socialization theory, (b) women and sexism in sport, and (c) small groups.

(Within your college or university) What are the future plans for sport sociology?

The future plans for sport sociology include: (a) continue to offer course(s), (b) develop additional course(s), (c) develop a cooperative undergraduate course with the Sociology Department, and (d) use sport sociology as a basis for developing related areas of expertise in sport marketing and management.

Discussion

American and Canadian colleges and universities are continuing to offer required or elective graduate and undergraduate courses in sport sociology. These courses have been offered at the various colleges and universities for almost 7 years. Consistent topics covered within the sport sociology courses were: sport socialization, race and sport, and politics and sport.

The new generation of highly specialized sport sociologists are teaching (graduate and undergraduate courses) and conducting research within the field. Faculty are conducting research in the following traditional areas in sport sociology: (a) socialization, (b) women and sexism, and (c) small groups. This finding suggests that sport sociologists, within North America, are beginning to increase their critical mass. Loy et al. (1978) and Spreitzer et al. (1980) concluded that the field of sport sociology must increase its critical mass if it is going to be perceived as a legitimate field of study.

The data also revealed that few students at the graduate or undergraduate level are pursuing a degree in sport sociology. This may be due to the fact that there are limited job opportunities for these students who complete their studies in this field. Those students who do find jobs are generally employed in

educational settings, recreation and sports administration. This is a particularly interesting finding since Purdy (1980) found that the number of graduate students in the field is increasing.

The future plans for sport sociology indicated that courses should be taught cooperatively with the Sociology Department. In addition, sport sociology courses should continue to provide interdisciplinary emphasis. Continued ties with sport law, administration and marketing may provide sport sociology students with alternative careers.

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Table 1

Rank Order of Course Topics by Number of Responses

Rank	Topic	Number of Responses
	Undergraduate Level	
1	Socialization	18
2	Race	15
3.5	Violence	11
3.5	Economics	11
5.5	Sexism	9
5.5	Media	9
8	Institutions	7
8	Politics	7
8	Values	7
11	Subcultures	6
11	Women	6
11	Education	6

Table 1A

Rank Order of Course Topics by Number of Responses

Rank	Topic	Number of Responses
	Graduate Level	
1	Sport in Society	7
2	Politics	5
3.5	Economics	3
3.5	Socialization	3
8.5	Social Stratification and Mobility	2
8.5	Education	2
8.5	Violence	2
8.5	Sport and the School	2
8.5	Sport as a Social Institution	2
8.5	Religion	2
8.5	Deviancy	2
8.5	Sport and American Culture	2

Table 2

Rank Order of Reference Texts by Number of Responses

Rank	Author and Reference Text	Number of Responses
1	Coakley, J., Sport in Society	23
2	Sage, G., Sport and American Society	22
3	Loy, J., McPherson, B., & Kenyon, G., Sport and Social System	20
4	Eitzen, S., & Sage, G. Sociology of American Sport	13
5	Eitzen, S., Sport in Contemporary Society	11
6	Michener, J., Sports in America	10
7	Leonard, W., A Sociological Perspective of Sport	9
8	Yiannakas, A., McIntyre, T., Melnick, M., & Hart, D., Sport Sociology: Contemporary Themes	7
9.5	Hart, M., Sport in the Social Cultural Process	4
9.5	Oglesby, B., Women and Sport	4